

The Land Bribery Bill.

SPEECH OF MR. CALHOUN.

On the Distribution of the Land in the State of the United States, August 24, 1841.

Mr. Calhoun said— If this bill should become a law, it would make a wide breach in the constitution, and be followed by changes...

According to the general doctrine, Congress had power to raise money, and appropriate it to all objects which it might deem calculated to promote the general welfare...

The Government has heretofore been supported almost exclusively from two sources of revenue—the lands and the customs...

This bill proposes to withdraw this large, permanent, and growing source of revenue from the Treasury of the United States...

The measure on its face is but a surrender of one of the two sources of revenue to the States, to be divided among them in proportion to their joint delegation in the two Houses of Congress...

But it is still worse. It is unequal and unjust, as well as grossly oppressive. It would be scarcely possible to arrange a system of taxes, under which the people of each State would pay back a sum equal to that received...

But I have not yet reached the reality of this profligate and wicked scheme. As unequal and unjust as it would be between State and State, it is still more so, regarded in its operations between the people.

But if, instead of restricting these powers to their proper objects, they should be permitted to be exercised in any other manner...

Such, and so many, are the evils of this bill, that I do not think it necessary to multiply them. It is a measure which would be a breach in the constitution, and be followed by changes...

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to the utter neglect of all the functions for which it was created. Then the proper responsibility of each to their respective constituency would be destroyed...

What I now propose is, to trace the change it would make in our financial system, with its bearings on what ought to be the policy of the Government.

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established our glorious political system, shall become extinct, and their descendants a base and sordid rabble. Till then, or till our opponents shall be expelled from power, and their place be filled by a more virtuous and patriotic generation...

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the permanent revenue from the customs; and this, when the whole support of the Government is about to be withdrawn exclusively on the foreign commerce of the country.

The swelling of the tide of emigrants in the first instance, from the lands, would lead to a corresponding flow of revenue, and that to extravagant expenditures, to be followed by embarrassment of the Treasury, and a glut of goods...

But its mischievous effects on the exterior relations of the country would be limited to its indirect consequences. There it would strike a direct and deadly blow, by withdrawing entirely from the defenses of the country one of the only two sources of our revenue...

But, strange as it may be, it is still more strange that the Government should have been so long in so grossly neglecting the duties of its office...

But as much as the defenses of the country would be weakened directly by the withdrawal of so large a fund, the loss would be by no means so heavy as that which, in its consequences, would fall on them.

There is but one nation on the globe from which we have to import arms, and that is Great Britain.

Every portion of our extended frontier demands attention, inland as well as maritime; but with this striking difference—that on the former, our power is as much increased as on the latter by the extension of our maritime frontiers.

There would be the assaults, and whatever works may be erected there, ought to have reference to that fact, and look mainly to protecting important points from sudden surprise and devastation, rather than to guard against any permanent lodgement of a force within our borders.

The difficult problem is the defence of our maritime frontier. That, of course, must consist of fortifications and a navy; but the question is, which ought to be mainly relied on, and to what extent the one may be considered as superseding the other.

Fortifications, as the means of defence, are liable to two formidable objections, either of which is decisive against them as an exclusive system of defence.

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